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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000208

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA. NSC FOR SHAPIRO/PASCUAL

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SUBJECT: MUNICIPALITY DEMOLISHES THREE HOMES IN EAST
JERUSALEM

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. The Jerusalem Municipality conducted three demolitions in East Jerusalem on January 28, including a large building inhabited by 45 people. The building's owner said the GoI Interior Ministry had postponed demolition until March 31, but that the Municipality acted on its own. According to UN OCHA, the land was zoned as public land for the settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev. The other two demolitions were of uninhabited additions to existing structures. End Summary.

JERUSALEM MUNICIPALITY DEMOLISHES THREE STRUCTURES

¶2. (C) Jerusalem Municipality representative Elad Halevy told PolOff that the Municipality executed three demolitions in East Jerusalem January 28. Two of them were uninhabited additions to existing buildings, one in the Silwan neighborhood and one in Beit Hanina. The third was a large, two-story building in Beit Hanina that had housed 45 residents. Halevy said an Israeli court overruled an appeal to cancel the demolition.

EXTENDED FAMILY DISPLACED DURING ON-GOING COURT PROCEDURES

¶3. (C) Muhammad Ja'abari, owner of the demolished Beit Hanina building, told PolOff January 29 that he purchased the land in 2000 and had been working since 2002 to legalize the building's construction, without success. Ja'abari claimed his lawyer obtained a postponement in early January from the GoI Interior Ministry until March 31, but the border police who oversaw the demolition did not recognize the Interior Ministry documents. Instead, they acted on orders from the Municipality. Ja'abari said the demolition left him and 44 family members, among them 21 children and two elderly persons, homeless. He said Israeli border police roughly handled several children and one elderly person during the demolition.

¶4. (C) OCHA representative Halla Bitar told PolOff January 29 that OCHA is investigating the claim that the Interior Ministry postponed the demolition. She said that the GoI claimed Ja'abari's building could not be legalized because the Ja'abari land was zoned as public space for the nearby settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev.

WALLES